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**FAMILY FACTORS WHICH LEAD TO SCHOOLS' DROP OUT IN  
MURANG'A EAST**

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## **FAMILY FACTORS WHICH LEAD TO SCHOOLS' DROP OUT IN MURANG'A EAST**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** The objective of the study was to find out family factors which led to school dropout in Murang'a East. Both Tinto's theory of students' retention (1982) and psychological retention model by Beans and Eaton (2000) were used to guide the research study. In the literature review, global education overview was reviewed. Education overview in Africa, East Africa and finally Kenya was also reviewed. Both primary and secondary information was used as the source of information.

**Method:** Descriptive research design was used. Simple random sampling was used to pick schools to be sampled and purposive sampling technique was used to get specific respondents for this study. Data analysis was by use of qualitative and quantitative techniques. Quantitative data was generated by use of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS).

**Results:** The study established that several family factors such as poverty, parental separation and marital conflicts led to school dropout.

**Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy:** A research study should be carried out to establish the counseling intervention measures which could reduce or eliminate school dropout.

**Key words:** *Family factors, public primary school, dropout.*

## **Background of the study**

Murang'a East is one of the sub-counties of Murang'a County with four divisions, and is 204 sq. kilometers, with a population of 93,351, as cited in Murang'a county development profile booklet (MCDP, 2013). Murang'a East sub county hosts the county headquarters. Climatically, it is subdivided into 2 climatic regions. The upper region with adequate rainfall which comes two times in a year. The second region is the lower region, it experiences rainfall fluctuations and can get very dry. When there is adequate rainfall, maize and beans do well. Main cash crop is coffee but has been neglected because of poor prices. Economic activities were mainly agriculture and service industries. There is a high rate of unemployment in the Sub-county which stands at 54.8% of the total labour force. (MCDP, 2013).

### **Education in Murang'a East**

Murang'a education performance was poor. Generally, Murang'a County when compared with other counties performs poorly e.g. in year 2012, it was position 40 out of 47 counties. In last year's KCPE, Murang'a East was position seven out of eight sub counties (MOEST, Emis, 2016).

Since 2003 when education was made free, many children joined primary schools in standard one, unfortunately the same number of pupils in different schools did not transit from one class to the next one until they completed standard eight. Statistics showed that between 2013 - 2014, 13.6% pupils in standard 7 dropped and 23.1% pupils dropped in standard 8 before they had completed their basic education, Basic education statistical booklet (BESB, 2014). Despite Murang'a east being a high economic potential region just like other regions of central Kenya, failure to retain those enrolled in school was a great concern for all Murang'a east people and especially the education stakeholders and managers. Data collected by MOEST (Emis, 2015) in Murang'a East showed that there was school drop out in primary schools and in every class. In 2015, data collected showed there was school drop out of 8.26% of pupils who joined standard one in 2008 compared to those who completed in standard 8 in 2015, MOEST (Emis, 2014). In another research by Gichomo (2007) on why boys drop out of school, she found out that out of the 1280 pupils who registered, 313 boys had dropped out of school in Murang'a East. Despite Free primary education being introduced into Kenyan public primary schools in 2003, pupils were still dropping out of school. There was therefore a need to find out factors that contributed to the drop out and how they could be reduced.

The purpose of the study was to investigate factors which contributed to primary schools' drop out. The objective of the study was to find out family factors which led to schools' drop out in Murang'a East. The research question was: Which were the family factors that led to primary schools' drop out in Murang'a East?

## **Material and Methods**

The study used descriptive design, this involved measurement, classification, analysis, comparison and interpretation of data. Descriptive survey is a method of collecting data by interviewing or administering questionnaires to a sample of individuals, (Orodho, 2003). When using this design, people's attitudes, opinions, habits, education or social issues are obtained (Orodho & Kombo, 2002). When using the design, the researcher identified the following: Constructed questions that gave the desired information, identified the individuals who were surveyed, identified the means by which the survey was conducted and summarized the data in a way that provided the designed descriptive information.

The target population was in Murang'a East, Murang'a county in central Kenya. The respondents were Head teachers, guidance and counseling teachers, standard eight prefects, PTA chairmen of primary schools and sampled primary schools' dropouts. The respondents, except the dropouts were leaders in their respective areas and had experience, and were well informed about education needs. In this study simple random sampling was used to select 40 schools out of 54 schools in Murang'a East Sub-County; with a population of 200 respondents. To select the sampled schools, a list of all schools was prepared. The sub-county had 4 divisions, so the schools were listed according to their divisions. The researcher then started by picking one number at an interview of 3 i.e. she picked numbers 1, 3, 6 etc this was repeated until she got the 40 schools needed. The criteria which was used to select the respondents was leadership in the school e.g. head teachers were the overall leaders in the school, standard eight prefects were leaders of the pupil population, PTA Chairpersons were the leaders of the parents in the school, and heads of counseling departments were in charge of counseling in the school. Convenience sampling was used to sample ten school dropouts.

The researcher did pre-testing with ten schools to measure both validity and reliability of the tools that were used. The researcher used the test-retest technique. Two sets of questionnaires and interview guides were released at an interval of three weeks before the final questionnaires and interview guides were given out. Once the first set of questionnaires were received back, the researcher read through them, and if a question looked ambiguous or too long, it was revised. The second set was sent out with corrections. Again after the second set of questionnaires were brought back, and corrected, then the last and final set of questionnaires and interview guide were prepared and used to collect the data.

Raw data obtained from the field was reviewed, recorded and then analyzed by use of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The researcher obtained permission to carry out the study from the National Council for Science and Technology (NACOST). She selected respondents using purposive sampling and briefed them on the importance of research. She then requested them to participate voluntarily in the areas requested by the researcher; that is, filling the questionnaire. The researcher assured them of

confidentiality, indicating that all information given would be treated with strict confidence and would only be used for the purpose of the study, and encouraged them to give correct information. The researcher also ensured high level of respect and courtesy to all respondents during the study. Last but not least the researcher also acknowledged the work of other authors to avoid plagiarism and fraud.

### Results and Discussion

The purpose of this research study was to investigate the family factors which led to primary school dropout in Murang'a East sub-county.

**Table 1: Response from head teachers: 7 leading factors that led to school dropout.**

No	Factors	No of Respondents	%
1	Parental separation and divorce	19	18.45
2	Increased poverty level	14	13.59
3	Parents' negligence	12	11.65
4	Parents' lack of interest in their children's education	10	9.71
5	Forced child labor	10	9.71
6	Lack of role modeling	7	6.80
7	Brutal Parents	6	5.83

Several factors were given by the respondents but the researcher picked 7 most common factors as shown in the table above. This table shows seven most prevalent family factors which led to school dropout. According to head teachers who were in constant touch with parents, parent separation and later divorce tops the list in school dropout at 18.45%, increased poverty at 13.59 %, and parental negligence of their children at 11.65%. Other factors stated were, forced child labor at 9.71%, lack of role modelling at 6.80%, and brutal parents at 5.83% also contributed to school drop out. Parents' separation/ divorce affected the children directly i.e. psychologically, financially and the children lacked care from their parents. Once the children were subjected to such trauma, their concentration in school was affected. When their performance went down, the children became demotivated and dropped out of school. Parents' poverty and negligence also affected the grades of the pupils and they dropped out of school. In her study of "Determinants of Low Access and Retention In Primary schools", Macharia (2011), stated that 40 % pupils from poor backgrounds attended and completed primary education compared to 70% of children from rich families.

**Table 2: Response from guidance and counseling teachers: 5 leading family factors that led to school dropout.**

No	Factors	No of respondents	%
1	Poverty	18	24.32
2	Family breakup / separation	14	18.92
3	Parents' negligence	8	10.81
4	Forced child labour	7	9.46
5	Parents' lack of interest in their children's education	6	8.11

Guidance and counseling teachers gave poverty as the main factor that led to school dropout at 24.32%. Other factors were family break up and / divorce at 18.92 %, parents' negligence at 10.81% , forced child labor at 9.46% and parents' lack of interest in their children's education at 8.11%. The findings in this study that parents' or lack of parents' support to their children's education agreed with a study done by Modisaotisile (2012) which found that dropouts from schools were triggered by many factors, among them poverty and lack of support for learners from home. A study by Antie (2007) concluded that household poverty remains one of the strongest predictors of school drop out. Children from poor family backgrounds lacked learning materials and this demotivated them, thus dropping out of school.

**Table 3: Response from PTA chairpersons: 5 leading family factors which led to school dropout.**

No	Factors	No of respondents	%
1	Poverty	14	25.45
2	Early pregnancy	8	14.55
3	Marital conflict	8	14.55
4	Lack of parental care	8	14.55
5	Parental separation and divorce	4	7.27

The chairpersons of the sampled schools stated several factors which led to school dropouts. The most prevalent was Poverty at 25.45%, and early pregnancy at 14.55%. Other factors given were marital conflict at 14.55%, and Lack of parental care at 14.55%. The same factors have been mentioned and discussed earlier in the tables 3 and 4 above.

**Table 4: Response from Std 8 pupils. 5 leading family factors which led to school dropout.**

No	Factors	No of respondents	%
1	Poverty	25	46.30
2	Marital conflict	7	12.96
3	lack of Parents' support	6	11.11
4	Lack of school levies	5	9.26
5	Lack of role modeling	2	3.70

The standard 8 respondents gave several factors which led to school dropout. The most prominent factors mentioned were poverty at 46.30 %, marital conflict at 12.96 %, and lack of parental care at 11.11 %. Others were lack of school levies at 9.2 %, and lack of role modelling mentioned by 3.70 % of the respondents. The standard 8 respondents viewed marital conflict and lack of levies as significant factors which led to school dropout. Pupils whose parents were not able to pay school levies in good time were frequently sent home to get it. A prolonged period of absence from school made the grades of the pupils drop. If this practice continued, the pupil was forced to repeat a class or dropout. UNESCO (1997) and Ngau (1991) both cited repetition as one of the factors which determined low retention and finally school dropout

**Table 5: Response from school dropouts: 6 leading family factors which led to school dropout.**

No	Family factors	No of respondents	%
1	Lack of school levies	7	11.2
2	Sent away from home by guardian	2	4.8
3	Family separation	2	3.2
4	Chronic absenteeism from school due to family problems	2	3.2
5	Poor parenting	1	1.6
6	Lack of basic needs and shelter due to poverty	1	1.6

Several factors were given by the school dropouts. The six most prominent factors were: Lack of school levies as mentioned by 11.20 % of the respondents, followed by, children being sent away from home by guardians as mentioned by 4.8 % of the respondents, and family separation at 3.2 % .Other family factors mentioned were chronic absenteeism from school due to family problems at 3.2%, poor parenting mentioned by 1.6 % of the respondents and lack of basic needs at 1.6 %. Lack of school levies as discussed earlier led to pupils being sent away, and this caused grade decline from the respectful pupils,

eventually the pupil gets demotivated and drops out of school. This finding agreed with a study by Masis, Kasente & Balihuta (2003) who stated that high levels of absenteeism and repetition led to high rates of school dropout.

**Table 6: Summary of the 10 leading family factors as stated by the 5 different categories of the respondents.**

No	Factors	No of respondents	%
1	Poverty	25	46.30
2	Parental separation	14	18.92
3	Lack of parental care	8	14.55
4	Marital conflict	8	14.55
5	Parents' negligence	12	11.65
6	Lack of school levies	7	11.2
7	Forced child labor	10	9.71
8	Lack of role models	7	6.80
9	Sent away from home by guardian	2	4.8
10	Chronic absenteeism from school due to family problems	2	3.2

### Summary

In summary, this study established many factors that were given by the different respondents. The researcher has listed 10 most prevalent mentioned family factors. The information showed that poverty at 46.30%, family separation at 18.92%, marital conflict at 14.55% and Lack of parental care at 14.55% were among the top list family factors which led to school dropout. Family factors therefore were a major factor for the school dropout in the public primary schools of Murang'a East. Poverty In this study was mentioned by all the respondents whereby it showed that in the absence of enough family finances, parents were unable to meet their basic obligations for their children e.g. paying school levies, buying school uniforms or paying for lunch programme. If the child's self-esteem dropped, he got demotivated and finally chose to leave or drop from school. This finding agreed with a study done by Wanjohi (2002) which observed that poverty and economic hardships led to 79% withdrawals from schools in Ongata Rongai subcounty. In her study on school drop out of boys, Gichomo (2007) indicated that child labour led to school dropout. This therefore agreed with what the researcher of this study has established that child labour led to school absenteeism. Continued school absenteeism made the pupils grades drop. If the pupils' grades continued to decline, the pupils became discouraged and finally dropped out of school.

### Recommendation on Research Findings



1. A research study should be carried out to establish the counseling intervention measures which could reduce or eliminate school dropout.

### **Recommendations on Future Research**

1. A research study should be carried out to establish factors which lead to school dropout in secondary schools and the intervention measures to stop dropout.
2. A research study should be carried out to find out the causes of family conflicts and breakup and the intervention measures that would be put in place.

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